

Rules of Engagement:
Unconventional Thinking Beats Unconventional Warfare
by J.J. Johnson - Editor & Chief of Sierra Times 09.23.01

This edition of Rules of Engagement addresses concerns from two readers who took issue with our previous [18 Wheels Advisory](#). Their comments merit a public response; in an effort to explain to everyone what kind of enemy we are up against, and how such an enemy has (and can again) exploit a weakness.

First, here is an excerpt (used several times) from the Novel I wrote, "[Cracking the Liberty Bell](#)" in 1997:

"...Sometimes you gotta be a little bit crazy to beat crazy people. Sane people don't do the unexpected."

Got that folks? Now, go back to Black Tuesday: Sane people don't drive planes into skyscrapers, do they?

At a local social event I attended Saturday, I found myself in quiet frustration again with the fantasies people have about how the U.S military should extract justice for what happened in New York and Washington. Not to mention the notable sighs of relief when Governor Tom Ridge (R-PA) was named to head up the new cabinet position of "Homeland Security". Guess we can all feel safer, now.

Conventional thinkers may feel safer, but in this kind of war, it's the unconventional thinking warrior who will win the day. To a degree, that was done on September 11, 2001. **In combat theory, the weapon becomes an extension of the soldier. With this enemy, the soldier becomes an extension of the weapon.** This changes the Rules of Engagement. Let's look at a response from a reader:

"Idiot. Any driver who passes an open scale at high speed don't get far anyway, really. Read this pile of horse (expletive) and see how stupid U really are."

This is 'conventional' thinking at its best. The readers assumes here that a) someone hell bent on driving a truck to "Allah" would actually slow down for a vehicle one-fifth its size with flashing lights and b) like its never been done before. Remember: In this combat theory, **the soldier is an extension of the weapon.** It is the job of the military and law enforcement to stop the folks pulling the triggers. We, on the other hand, have to deal with the business end of the matter - if and when the time comes.

Flashback to Black Tuesday. There are (were) set guidelines for dealing with hijackers aboard aircraft. There are also rules about cell phone use on aircraft. The cell phone rules were broken providing important information to United Airlines Flight #93. This led to unconventional counter-operations on that aircraft, neutralizing the weaponry. The other flights apparently followed the conventional rules of "stay in your seats" and keep your seat belts fastened." We are not blaming them for what happened. This is what we are taught. Obey the authorities. Follow the rules. The Heroes of Flight #93 realized they were dealing

with crazy people. "Let's Roll!", and they got a little crazy - and beat' em.

Unconventional thinking saved the day.

The next reader made another comment:

"I am a truck driver and I frequently haul fuel, equipment and sometimes even haul and use explosives as part of my job (I build logging roads). I don't drive interstate but sometimes do drive on interstate highways and if some yahoos were to try any of this on me there could be a small war.

The rolling roadblock would result in shots fired and I would not even try to find out why they were doing it first, since this is how criminals would hijack my truck and is a threat in itself I would be justified in doing it.

Even the attempt to get me to pull over would earn them a good look at my side arm and "checking me out" would make sure it was handy and since I know those I work around I also know I am not alone.

Since I usually work in the woods I doubt I will ever have to see any of these guys who are doing this but this is dangerous and if tried will result in trouble for everyone concerned.

Another concern here is that some driver would actually be stupid enough to pull over on the request of another who is "worried". If somebody actually did this both him and the one who asked him should both be put in jail for public stupidity in the first degree."

The reader here made at least one good point: He and his associates travel armed. Excellent. But what I see in his response is a knee-jerk reaction we as Americans all suffer from - a psyche that we citizens and government officials will HAVE to break from, at least in part, to defend America and win this war. Would this reader have responded differently if the information came from a 'government' source? Perhaps, but since Sierra Times is not one of those sources, the response fits the bill of "Who the Hell do you think you are?" attitude. We as Americans, have been seduced into waiting to be told what to do by an authority, even to the point of rejecting what we obviously should do when told from someone else. Let's discuss this reader's concern.

During my travels on interstate highways at night, I can recall at least three different occasions (two big rigs; one small pickup) where the exact maneuver described in our advisory was done to avoid a disaster. In all three cases, the targeted vehicle had a driver falling asleep at the wheel.

In each case that I witnessed, the other drivers (including myself with the small pick up), tried repeatedly hailing the errant driver via CB radio, flashed high-beams, calling law enforcement etc. - all to no avail. The box-in maneuver, and blowing the horns finally got the errant driver's attention, and they pulled over - no problem. The rolling road- blocks that I've seen (with my own eyes) never resulted in shots fired.

From our advisory, the above reader could avoid 'a small war' by following the other guidelines listed in the advisory such as making sure radio was working, and a good walk

around the vehicle before getting on the road. I also mentioned:

a) [Visual identification of driver.](#)

This alone would do more to see if there was a problem. Truckers are not stupid. They would know what to look for. I don't know too many drivers who would raise a weapon just for seeing another driver in the lane across from him. I also stated clearly: *"Take all precautions to avoid active engagement, and work under the conditions that said driver may be willing to sacrifice himself as well as the vehicle. Use your best judgment."*

We are in a war where the enemy has proven the ability and will to use improvised weaponry - transport machinery, items, and himself for a weapon of mass destruction. You have seen it with your own eyes. To assume that this enemy is one-dimensional, or 'conventional' thinking, and to act only with the blessing of a 'governmental' authority, is why we are digging through the rubble of Lower Manhattan and the Pentagon today.

September 11, 2001 changed America forever. It changed the way we think. It forced us, especially pilots, to see the need for changes in airport and airline security protocols that were written based on past experience. It forced a complete overhaul of the way we all look at airport and airline security. It forces us to think about our own security - personally and nationally from a foreign enemy that dares to wreak havoc on our own soil. We have not had to consider this in most of our life times.

Welcome to the [Real American Reality Check](#). We cannot use conventional thinking to deal with this problem. These days, conventional thinking includes: dialing 911, waiting for 'the authorities to arrives', and following their rules, even if it can get you - and thousands of others killed. When it comes to breaking the rules to save thousands of our fellow Americans (including law enforcement), and obeying the will of politicians with "feel good" laws, I'll take breaking the rules. After all, it is what those who founded this country told us to do.

This is reality. This is war. These are the Rules of Engagement.

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